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In with the new...

By Joe Bouch

FROM
THE EDITOR

This issue of *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment* introduces our new design, both inside and out. *Advances* was launched in September 1994, a mere 32 pages long. The journal rapidly expanded, and precisely ten years ago it reached its current length of 80 pages and was given a glossy card cover. In other respects its appearance has changed little over the years. Despite our positive feelings about the old design, the Editorial Board favoured change. We thought that there could be a stronger visual appeal, ensuring that the journal would not come to look outdated. We chose to have a picture on the front cover and an 'Editor's pick' for each issue. Our first cover image is of valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*), one of the many medicinal plants used in a worldwide 'Natural Health Service', discussed by Francis Dunne (pp. 49–56, this issue), and my first Editor's pick appears below. These new features will give *Advances* a more magazine-like appearance, but we will not be dumbing down.

A note about the reference style: we have chosen to keep the Harvard 'name and date' citation system for references, even though the numbered Vancouver style is becoming increasingly fashionable. As *Advances* is an educational journal in which articles have fewer references, we believe that the Harvard system will be preferred by our readers. We have, however, slightly modified the Harvard presentation, so that only the first-named author and year appear in the text; the reference list shows the first three authors, followed by et al, as before.

I will write this column for each issue. I intend to use my 500 or so words to discuss, among other things, the practical and educational principles of *Advances*, to draw attention to any changes and explain the reasons for them, and perhaps occasionally to ask for specific ideas and contributions.

How psychiatrists think

My intention in the Editor's pick is to point to articles that embody the principles of *Advances*, rather than to select a 'best' article from each issue. In going about this, I hope to become better informed myself of the qualities that are important for improving our articles.

My first choice in the new-look journal is 'How psychiatrists think', by Niall Crumlish & Brendan Kelly (pp. 72–79). Here we are introduced to heuristics – mental shortcuts that usually operate without our conscious awareness and that are vital to the process of making decisions. Heuristics are particularly useful where speed is required and there is both uncertainty and complexity, i.e. situations typical of a consultant's daily life! Mature clinical judgement relies on heuristics but there are potential pitfalls, and the authors discuss ways to counteract the biases that may result. Their article serves as an aid to reflective practice, a hallmark of good CPD. I have already used the draft in educational supervision with my ST5 trainee to discuss decision-making on our ward rounds. It will repay careful reading and reflection.